3.261 : CDS-80-1

CDS-80-1

SPECIAL DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSES

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Is It Being Narrowed by a Back-to-the-City Movement?

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U. S. Department of Commerce
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Issued March 1980

U.S. Department of Commerce
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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Long, Larry H
The city-suburb income gap—is it being narrowed by a back-to-the-city movement?

(Special demographic analyses ; CDS-80-1)
Includes bibliographical references.
1. Income distribution—United States. 2. Suburbs—United States. 3. Urban renewal—United States. 4. Residential mobility—United States. I. Dahmann, Donald C., joint author. II. Title. III. Series.
HC110.I5L66 339.2'2'0973 **80-11852**

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402

Stock No. 003-024-02378-4

Preface

This study launches a new series of publications from the Census Bureau's Center for Demographic Studies. The purpose of these publications is to provide insight and perspective on important demographic trends and patterns. Most bring together data from several sources and attempt to enhance the use of Census Bureau data by pointing out the relevance of the statistics and population developments for policy analysis and policy planning. A distinguishing feature of the studies is the inclusion of broad speculative analyses and illustrative hypotheses offered by the authors as aids in identifying the reasons underlying population changes.

The authors are research associates in the Center for Demographic Studies. Larry Long holds a Ph.D. degree in sociology. His work has appeared in a number of social science journals and as Bureau publications, including *The Geographical Mobility of Americans: An International Comparison* (with Celia Boertlein, 1976), *Racial Succession in Individual Housing Units* (with Daphne Spain, 1978), *Interregional Migration of the Poor: Some Recent Changes* (1978), and *Reasons for Interstate Migration: Jobs, Retirement, Climate, and Other Influences* (with Kristin Hansen, 1979).

Donald Dahmann received his doctorate in geography from the University of Chicago in 1976. He joined the Census Bureau in 1977 after spending a year on the staff of the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences. His recent publications include *Population Redistribution in the United States in the 1970s* (with Brian J. L. Berry, National Academy of Sciences, 1977) and "North-South Differences in Housing and the Housing and Community Development Act of 1977" *(Journal of the American Real Estate and Urban Economics Association,* Summer 1979). He is currently analyzing subjective indicators of neighborhood quality, including the relationship between perceptual and evaluative indicators and their variation by size of place and between cities and suburbs.

One of the major urban trends in the United States during recent decades has been the growing disparity between residents of the central city and suburban portions of metropolitan areas. Cities and suburbs in the aggregate have tended to become increasingly dissimilar in a number of respects, perhaps most notably in terms of racial composition and socioeconomic status. The percentage of Blacks in many central cities has increased greatly since World War II (Long, 1975), and the income level of central city residents has tended to fall farther behind that of suburbanites (Schnore, 1972). The growing socioeconomic disparity within metropolitan areas stands in sharp contrast to the many decreasing socioeconomic differences between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan populations during the 1970's (Zuiches and Brown, 1978).

The processes producing increased city-suburb socioeconomic differentiation within metropolitan areas while metropolitan-nonmetropolitan differentiation was decreasing are not entirely unrelated. Extensive rural-to-urban migration during the 1950's and 1960's carried many Blacks and low-income, low-skilled persons to central cities at a time when large numbers of Whites and middle-income families were departing cities for suburban residences. More recently, this suburbanization has extended into the "exurban" fringe where metropolitan areas encroach upon nonmetropolitan territory. The outcome of these opposing movements was that cities became increasingly Black and contained a growing proportion of the Nation's low-income population, while suburban and nonmetropolitan populations were often registering above-average increases in personal income.

Wide disparities between the compositions of city and suburban populations are a matter of concern because they can create numerous problems in achieving effective governmental action. For example, when a central city finds that to an increasing degree it is home to the poor and unemployed, its

policies and programs understandably tend to focus on welfare, public housing, and the creation of jobs for the unemployed; but priorities of neighboring suburban communities composed of mostly affluent, professionally employed households likely reflect a vastly different set of interests. Such opposing policy outlooks of neighboring jurisdictions can sometimes stand in the way of cooperation on issues that are of mutual concern, like development of regional transportation systems, water supplies, waste treatment, and other projects that require a metropolitanwide approach (Nathan and Adams, 1976).

Moreover, growing city-suburb economic disparities may have a tendency to steer population patterns toward still more differentiation within metropolitan areas. There may be bandwagon effects, so that as more middle-income households move out of cities, there are fewer reasons for others to stay; as one econometric study concluded, "central cities are caught in a vicious circle, whereby the more rapidly the middle class families move to the suburbs, the greater is the incentive for the exodus of those remaining" (Bradford and Kelejian, 1973).

A good deal of speculation—and some statistical evidence—suggests that the potential for halting this "vicious circle" already exists. In fact, several indicators may be cited (e.g., in Long, forthcoming), including: (1) an apparent decline in the rate of rural-to-urban migration, which by itself may have previously created pressures for middle-income households to move from cities to suburbs (Tucker, 1976); (2) an apparent increase in the incidence of Black-to-White household successions in central cities accompanied by a rise in the socioeconomic status of White replacement households (Spain et al., 1980); (3) numerous media accounts of the "gentrification" of lower income neighborhoods and case studies (see examples in Laska and Spain, forthcoming) of a back-to-the-city or stay-in-the-city trend among younger households who find housing bargains by investing "sweat equity" in renovating inner-city townhouses; and (4) demographic trends that entail falling fertility levels and more two-earner households who apparently feel less pressure to establish a home in the suburbs than earlier child-oriented households and whose affluence and commitment to professional careers constitute a demand for renovated inner-city residences. Furthermore, the urban poor who are displaced by these processes may be squeezed out of cities altogether, perhaps to older housing in the "inner suburbs."

Quite clearly, the formulation of effective urban policies would be enhanced through assessment of the strength and momentum of each of these processes. One of the dilemmas of current policy planning, however, is the absence of precise estimates of either (1) the number and characteristics of back-to-the-city/stay-in-the-city types, and (2) the number and destinations of low-income persons displaced by the gentrifying trends. Even if such data were available, there would still be a need to gauge the effects of such trends on the overall composition of city populations, as it is entirely possible that

urban revitalization is concentrated in only a few urban neighborhoods and has not yet reached sufficient magnitude to affect citywide averages.

A very significant citywide average is the income level, especially in relation to the suburban population. If continued long enough and with enough force, inner-city revitalization should halt the expansion of the city-suburb income gap and even bring about a narrowing of it. Hence, if we cannot measure directly the number of gentrifying movers and the persons they displace, perhaps we can approach the matter indirectly and try to measure the results of such processes by looking at trends in city-suburb income differences.

The following sections examine national trends in city-suburb income differences since 1960 as well as trends in the 20 largest metropolitan areas during the 1970's. We stress the importance of alternative income measures (income per family versus income per person) in making city-suburb income comparisons and present an attempt to differentiate the close-in, inner suburbs that lie along city boundaries and the newer more distant suburbs. Throughout, we will be trying to use the most recent available data to see if a narrowing of the city-suburb income gap is occurring. These efforts should be looked upon as a preliminary assessment, however, for not until the 1980 census data are available will there be information on changes in the demographic, racial, and socioeconomic composition of individual city and suburban neighborhoods since 1970.

GENERAL BACKGROUND

A widening of the income gap between city and suburban families can be seen in figure 1, which shows the median income of city and suburban families (solid lines) for the Nation as a whole and also the ratio of the median income of city families to median income of suburban families, for income received in selected years between 1959 and 1977. The numbers on which the chart is based are shown in table 1. In interpreting the figure, remember that the data come from censuses or surveys taken in March or April following each of the years shown; for example, the most recent data are for the calendar year 1977 and come from the March 1978 Current Population Survey, which asked respondents to report their total money income received in 1977. In this figure and elsewhere "suburban" refers to the entire portion of standard metropolitan statistical areas (SMSA's) lying outside the central city or cities.

The chart's solid lines clearly diverge, indicating a widening income gap between city and suburban families. Figures in table 1 show that in 1960 (income in 1959) suburban families had incomes, on the average, that exceeded those of central city families by $867 per year. By 1978 (income in 1977) that gap had widened to $3,967. More important, however, is the *relative* difference between the median incomes of central city and suburban families. As seen from the bars in figure 1, central city families in 1960 (income in 1959) had a median income that was 89 percent as large as that of

Figure 1. Widening income gap between cities and their suburban rings, in relative terms (left-hand scale) and absolute values (right-hand scale), for all SMSA's: Selected years, 1959 to 1977

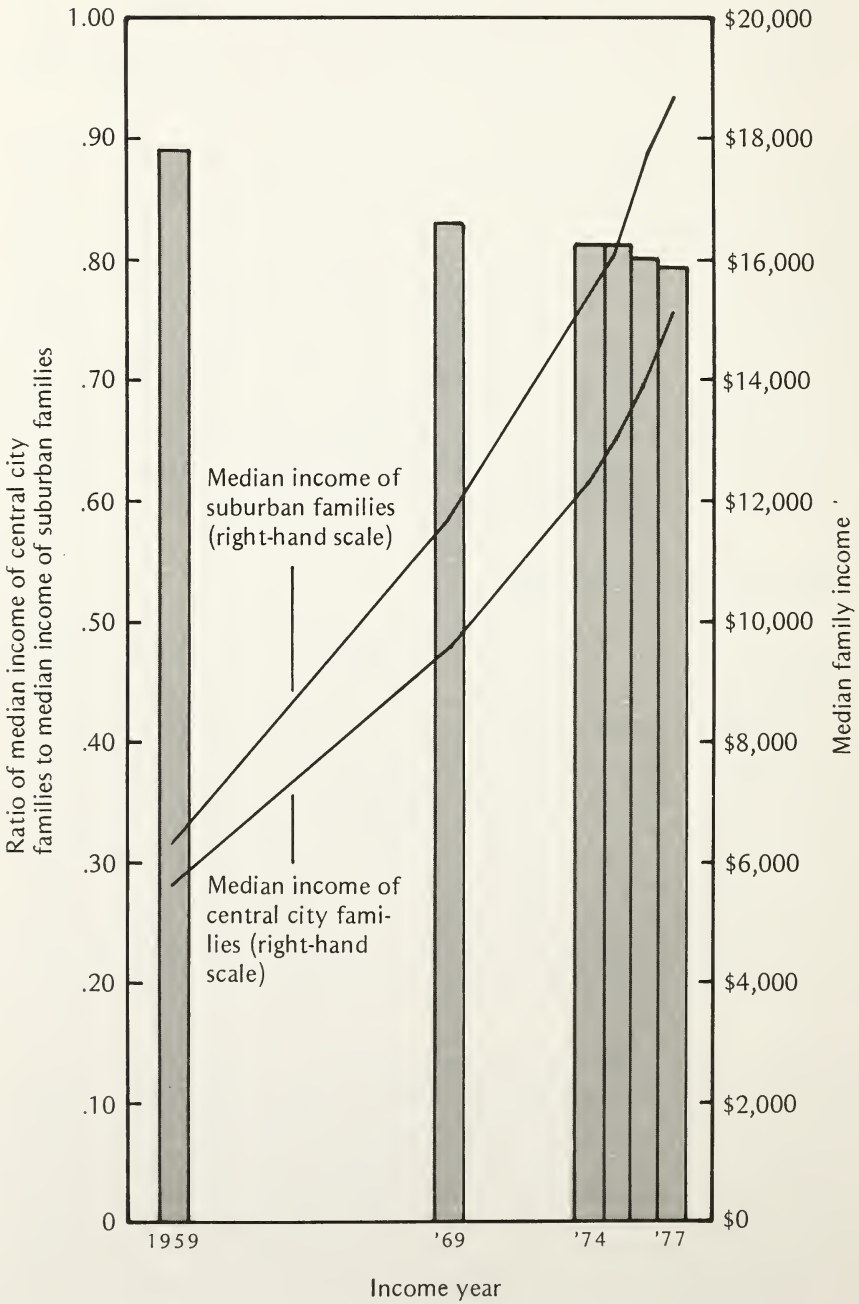


Table 1. Median Income of Families and Per Capita Income of All Persons Living in Central Cities of SMSA's, Balance of SMSA's, and Nonmetropolitan Areas: Selected Years, 1959 to 1977

Income base and area	Year income received[1]					
	1959	1969	1974	1975	1976	1977
	Amount					
Median family income:						
Central cities of SMSA's	5,940	9,507	12,275	12,990	13,952	14,933
Balance of SMSA's	6,707	11,411	15,126	16,122	17,440	18,900
Nonmetropolitan areas	4,485	7,832	11,045	11,600	12,831	13,789
Per capita income:						
Central cities of SMSA's	NA	3,267	NA	NA	5,236	5,771
Balance of SMSA's	NA	3,554	NA	NA	5,921	6,496
Nonmetropolitan areas	NA	2,483	NA	NA	4,435	4,858
	Ratio					
Median family income:						
Central city/balance of SMSA's	0.89	0.83	0.81	0.81	0.80	0.79
Central city/nonmetropolitan areas	1.32	1.21	1.11	1.12	1.09	1.08
Balance of SMSA/nonmetropolitan areas	1.50	1.46	1.37	1.39	1.36	1.37
Per capita income:						
Central city/balance of SMSA's	NA	0.92	NA	NA	0.88	0.89
Central city/nonmetropolitan areas	NA	1.32	NA	NA	1.18	1.19
Balance of SMSA/nonmetropolitan areas	NA	1.43	NA	NA	1.34	1.34

NA Not available.

[1] Data for 1959 refer to city boundaries and metropolitan area definitions in use in 1960. All other data are for city boundaries and metropolitan area definitions as of 1970.

Source: Estimates prepared by the authors with data from the 1960 and 1970 censuses and March Current Population Surveys, as reported by the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1964, 1973, 1976, 1977a, 1978a, 1979a).

suburban families; the ratio dropped to 83 percent in 1970 and since then has dropped further, to 79 percent in 1978, indicating a widening relative difference between city and suburban families in terms of income.

This growing income gap between city and suburban families results from the fact that incomes of suburban families have increased faster than the average income of city families. Furthermore, it is important to point out that the median income of city families has failed to keep up with inflation, and in real terms, i.e., adjusted for inflation, the average income of city families was lower in 1977 than in 1969. During this 8-year period, the

median income of city families rose 57 percent but the Consumer Price Index rose even faster, 65 percent. Suburban families approximately kept up with inflation, as their median income rose 66 percent during the same period.

A somewhat rosier view of income levels in central cities is obtained when one looks at income on a per capita basis (table 1). On a per capita basis, the income of central city residents rose 77 percent—faster than the rate of inflation—between 1969 and 1977. How is it that per capita income of city residents kept up with inflation but income per family did not? The basic explanation is that the size of families has been falling nationally and as of 1977 averaged 3.29 members for central city families and 3.40 members for suburban families, so that family income (which increasingly comes from more than one family member) is spread among fewer persons (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1978c). Furthermore, growing numbers of persons do not live in families at all but live alone or belong to households not ordinarily recorded as families by the Census Bureau (cohabiting couples, roommates, etc.). As of 1977, one of three central city households consisted of a person living alone or only with nonrelatives compared with about one of five households in the suburbs (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1978b). The reasons for the declining family and household size are many and include falling fertility, marital dissolutions, and simply an apparent preference to live independent of other family members (one's parents or one's grown children).

City-suburb income differences are smaller when measured on a per person basis than when measured on a per family basis. The city-to-suburb income ratio for income gained during 1977 was .79 for family income and .89 for per capita income. Thus, the median income of central city families is 79 percent of suburban families, while the per capita income in central cities is 89 percent of the per capita income in suburbs. The smaller difference associated with per capita income reflects the fact that central city households tend to be smaller than suburban households, so that household incomes are typically spread among fewer persons than in the suburbs.

Even on a per person basis, however, the city-suburb income gap has widened in the 1970's. In 1970 (income year 1969) the per capita income of city residents was 92 percent of that of suburban residents; by 1978 (income in 1977) the per capita income of city residents was only 89 percent of that of suburbanites. These data do suggest, however, that the city-suburb income gap may have stopped increasing between the last two years for which data are available. The city-suburb per capita income ratio (table 1) was .88 for income received in 1976 and .89 for income received in 1977. The apparent rise between these two years is subject to sampling variability and by itself does not constitute unequivocal evidence that the past trend toward widening of city-suburb income differences has been reversed.

The very broad view portrayed in figure 1 (and table 1) can actually be misleading because the age, size, and regional location of individual

metropolitan areas have previously been found to affect the direction and degree of city-suburb socioeconomic differentiation. More specifically, metropolitan areas that are small, have recently achieved metropolitan status, or are located in the South or West have been found to have relatively small city-suburb socioeconomic differentiation and sometimes have a central city of higher socioeconomic status than the suburban ring (Brazer, 1967; Smith, 1970; Schnore, 1972). Since metropolitan areas with these characteristics—small size, young age, and a southern or western location—have been accounting for a disproportionate amount of the total metropolitan population growth in the 1970's, there is a built-in force for narrowing of city-suburb differences when examined in the aggregate. That there has not been a clearer narrowing of city-suburb income differences indicates that other trends have tended to override this factor.

THE 20 LARGEST METROPOLITAN AREAS

The logical extension from a national perspective on these trends is to examine the city and suburban parts of individual metropolitan areas. In an attempt to do this, we examined median family incomes in the central city and suburban balance of the 20 largest SMSA's, using data from the 1970 census and Current Population Surveys taken in March of 1976, 1977, and 1978. The survey data are subject to sampling variability (see, for example, U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1979a), and in view of the sample size we decided not to examine city and suburban family incomes in SMSA's smaller than the 20 largest.

As a counterpoint to these data, per capita income in the city and suburban portions of the same 20 SMSA's were also computed using the data from administrative records (income tax returns) compiled for the distribution of Federal funds under the revenue-sharing program. These data are not subject to sampling error, although they are subject to other types of error, like misreporting of place of residence (see U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1977b, 1979b).

For the central city and suburban components of the 20 largest SMSA's, median family income is shown in table 2, and per capita income is shown in table 3 for 1969 and subsequent income years. In both tables, 1970 boundaries are utilized to define the metropolitan areas (U.S. Office of Management and Budget, 1976).

We want to pay particular attention to the cities most frequently mentioned as having extensive back-to-the-city trends. A great many cities are cited in this regard; Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston are often mentioned, perhaps because they have been intensively observed and studied (see, for example, references in Laska and Spain, forthcoming; Connecticut Housing Investment Fund, 1979, p. 1; A City Revival, 1978, p. 28; Rouse, 1979, p. E1). Washington, D.C., has been viewed as the "vanguard of the back-to-the-city movement" (Peirce, 1978).

Table 2. Median Income of Central City and Suburban Families and Ratio of City-to-Suburb Family Income, for the 20 Largest SMSA's: 1969, 1975 to 1977

Area of SMSA	Year income received				Average, 1975 to 1977
	1969	1975	1976	1977	
	Amount				
CENTRAL CITIES					
New York, N.Y.	9,682	12,246	12,618	13,287	12,717
Los Angeles-Long Beach, Calif.	10,503	13,770	14,287	14,369	14,142
Chicago, Ill.	10,242	13,533	13,508	14,859	13,967
Philadelphia, Pa.-N.J.	10,431	11,975	12,268	13,169	12,471
Detroit, Mich.	7,944	12,401	15,123	17,991	15,172
San Francisco-Oakland, Calif.	10,190	12,555	15,376	15,763	14,565
Washington, D.C.-Md.-Va.	9,583	14,900	13,145	14,382	14,142
Boston, Mass.	9,133	13,298	13,570	15,377	14,082
Pittsburgh, Pa.	8,800	11,642	12,907	16,407	13,652
St. Louis, Mo.-Ill.	8,182	9,535	10,640	11,224	10,466
Baltimore, Md.	8,815	10,744	13,070	13,546	12,453
Cleveland, Ohio	9,107	11,593	11,911	12,917	12,140
Houston, Texas	9,875	14,596	16,636	16,875	16,036
Newark, N.J.	7,735	7,339	7,864	8,985	8,063
Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.	9,960	14,288	16,634	16,764	15,895
Dallas, Texas	10,019	15,023	16,604	16,891	16,173
Seattle-Everett, Wash.	10,946	15,683	15,049	14,694	15,142
Anaheim-Santa Ana-Garden Grove, Calif.	11,260	15,682	14,192	20,750	16,875
Milwaukee, Wis.	10,262	13,737	13,801	14,953	14,164
Atlanta, Ga.	8,399	10,346	11,515	11,717	11,193
BALANCE OF SMSA's					
New York, N.Y.	13,560	18,978	19,145	21,889	20,004
Los Angeles-Long Beach, Calif.	11,293	14,688	15,276	17,428	15,797
Chicago, Ill.	13,461	19,948	21,761	22,212	21,307
Philadelphia, Pa.-N.J.	11,675	16,424	16,971	19,526	17,640
Detroit, Mich.	13,253	18,510	20,712	21,958	20,393
San Francisco-Oakland, Calif.	12,533	18,203	19,813	20,732	19,583
Washington, D.C.-Md.-Va.	13,893	19,754	23,083	24,158	22,332
Boston, Mass.	12,058	16,532	18,074	18,980	17,862
Pittsburgh, Pa.	10,039	15,512	15,921	16,990	16,141
St. Louis, Mo.-Ill.	10,393	16,838	19,197	19,083	18,373
Baltimore, Md.	11,755	17,581	20,358	21,453	19,797
Cleveland, Ohio	12,704	17,309	19,501	20,542	19,117
Houston, Texas	10,593	17,067	17,233	19,243	17,848
Newark, N.J.	12,878	18,128	17,902	21,320	19,117
Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.	12,170	19,525	21,249	23,536	21,437
Dallas, Texas	10,764	15,101	17,408	18,381	16,963
Seattle-Everett, Wash.	12,168	20,352	19,914	21,180	20,482
Anaheim-Santa Ana-Garden Grove, Calif.	13,123	17,270	18,417	20,336	18,674
Milwaukee, Wis.	12,512	18,148	20,449	24,674	21,090
Atlanta, Ga.	11,675	15,672	18,602	19,672	17,982

Table 2. Median Income of Central City and Suburban Families and Ratio of City-to-Suburb Family Income, for the 20 Largest SMSA's: 1969, 1975 to 1977—Continued

Area of SMSA	Year income received				Average, 1975 to 1977
	1969	1975	1976	1977	
	Ratio				
CENTRAL CITY FAMILIES TO SUBURBAN FAMILIES					
New York, N.Y.	.71	.65	.66	.61	.64
Los Angeles-Long Beach, Calif.	.93	.94	.94	.82	.90
Chicago, Ill.	.76	.68	.62	.67	.66
Philadelphia, Pa.-N.J.	.89	.73	.72	.67	.71
Detroit, Mich.	.60	.67	.73	.82	.74
San Francisco-Oakland, Calif.	.81	.69	.78	.76	.74
Washington, D.C.-Md.-Va.	.69	.75	.57	.60	.63
Boston, Mass.	.76	.80	.75	.81	.79
Pittsburgh, Pa.	.88	.75	.81	.97	.84
St. Louis, Mo.-Ill.	.79	.57	.55	.59	.57
Baltimore, Md.	.74	.61	.64	.63	.63
Cleveland, Ohio	.72	.67	.61	.63	.64
Houston, Texas	.93	.86	.97	.88	.90
Newark, N.J.	.60	.40	.44	.42	.42
Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.	.82	.73	.78	.71	.74
Dallas, Texas	.93	.99	.95	.92	.95
Seattle-Everett, Wash.	.90	.77	.76	.69	.74
Anaheim-Santa Ana-Garden Grove, Calif.	.86	.91	.77	1.02	.90
Milwaukee, Wis.	.82	.76	.67	.61	.67
Atlanta, Ga.	.72	.66	.62	.60	.62

Source: 1969 data are from the 1970 census (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1973). Data for income years 1975, 1976, and 1977 are from March Current Population Surveys of 1976, 1977, and 1978 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1977a, 1978a, 1979a) and unpublished data.

To reduce the sampling variability associated with city and suburban median family incomes, data for income years 1975, 1976, and 1977 were averaged (figures in the last column of table 2). In 4 of the 20 metropolitan areas the averaged data give some evidence of a rise in the ratio of central city to suburban median family incomes, indicating a possible reduction of the income gap. The four metropolitan areas are Detroit, Boston, Dallas, and Anaheim-Santa Ana-Garden Grove. But the apparent rise in the city-suburb ratios of median family income is small in every case and probably best interpreted simply as presenting some evidence that in these four areas the city-suburb gap in family incomes was not widening in the latter half of the 1970's.

The data on per capita income (table 3) present another view of the 20 metropolitan areas. In four of the metropolitan areas there is evidence of a

Table 3. Per Capita Income of Central City and Suburban Residents and Ratio of City-to-Suburban Income Per Capita, for the 20 Largest SMSA's: Selected Years, 1969 to 1975

Area of SMSA	Year income received			
	1969	1972	1974	1975
	Amount			
CENTRAL CITIES				
New York, N.Y.	3,698	4,256	4,975	5,222
Los Angeles-Long Beach, Calif.	3,952	4,526	5,289	5,692
Chicago, Ill.	3,403	3,998	4,701	4,984
Philadelphia, Pa.-N.J.	3,017	3,672	4,329	4,660
Detroit, Mich.	3,199	3,800	4,460	4,661
San Francisco-Oakland, Calif.	4,025	4,717	5,672	6,178
Washington, D.C.-Md.-Va.	3,842	4,808	5,565	6,007
Boston, Mass.	3,095	3,663	4,261	4,503
Pittsburgh, Pa.	3,072	3,704	4,496	4,919
St. Louis, Mo.-Ill.	2,726	3,306	3,976	4,278
Baltimore, Md.	2,876	3,602	4,237	4,577
Cleveland, Ohio	2,823	3,263	3,908	4,084
Houston, Texas	3,375	4,125	5,184	5,723
Newark, N.J.	2,492	2,903	3,375	3,586
Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.	3,446	4,181	5,093	5,439
Dallas, Texas	3,697	4,399	5,347	5,715
Seattle-Everett, Wash.	3,990	4,602	5,699	6,348
Anaheim-Santa Ana-Garden Grove, Calif.	3,442	3,998	4,724	5,018
Milwaukee, Wis.	3,183	3,856	4,642	4,902
Atlanta, Ga.	3,156	3,822	4,556	4,820
BALANCE OF SMSA's				
New York, N.Y.	4,292	5,049	5,918	6,182
Los Angeles-Long Beach, Calif.	3,792	4,398	5,166	5,504
Chicago, Ill.	4,180	4,971	5,983	6,270
Philadelphia, Pa.-N.J.	3,662	4,394	5,238	5,562
Detroit, Mich.	4,013	4,772	5,644	5,824
San Francisco-Oakland, Calif.	4,135	4,982	6,052	6,516
Washington, D.C.-Md.-Va.	4,418	5,586	6,574	7,199
Boston, Mass.	3,888	4,620	5,415	5,694
Pittsburgh, Pa.	3,170	3,864	4,758	5,125
St. Louis, Mo.-Ill.	3,499	4,177	5,012	5,308
Baltimore, Md.	3,624	4,502	5,486	5,806
Cleveland, Ohio	4,115	4,720	5,722	5,987
Houston, Texas	3,163	4,008	5,059	5,601
Newark, N.J.	4,329	5,209	6,229	6,602
Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.	3,727	4,463	5,444	5,760
Dallas, Texas	3,317	4,008	4,922	5,291
Seattle-Everett, Wash.	3,732	4,147	5,258	5,854
Anaheim-Santa Ana-Garden Grove, Calif.	4,067	4,845	5,856	6,263
Milwaukee, Wis.	3,808	4,586	5,620	5,930
Atlanta, Ga.	3,674	4,653	5,623	5,869

Table 3. Per Capita Income of Central City and Suburban Residents and Ratio of City-to-Suburban Income Per Capita, for the 20 Largest SMSA's: Selected Years, 1969 to 1975--Continued

Area of SMSA	Year income received			
	1969	1972	1974	1975
	Ratio			
CENTRAL CITY FAMILIES TO SUBURBAN FAMILIES				
New York, N.Y.	.86	.84	.84	.84
Los Angeles-Long Beach, Calif.	1.04	1.03	1.02	1.03
Chicago, Ill.	.81	.80	.79	.79
Philadelphia, Pa.-N.J.	.82	.84	.83	.84
Detroit, Mich.	.80	.80	.79	.80
San Francisco-Oakland, Calif.	.97	.95	.94	.95
Washington, D.C.-Md.-Va.	.87	.86	.85	.83
Boston, Mass.	.80	.79	.79	.79
Pittsburgh, Pa.	.97	.96	.94	.96
St. Louis, Mo.-Ill.	.78	.79	.79	.81
Baltimore, Md.	.79	.80	.77	.79
Cleveland, Ohio	.69	.69	.68	.68
Houston, Texas	1.07	1.03	1.02	1.02
Newark, N.J.	.58	.56	.54	.54
Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.	.92	.94	.94	.94
Dallas, Texas	1.11	1.10	1.09	1.08
Seattle-Everett, Wash.	1.07	1.11	1.08	1.08
Anaheim-Santa Ana-Garden Grove, Calif.	.85	.83	.81	.80
Milwaukee, Wis.	.84	.84	.83	.83
Atlanta, Ga.	.86	.82	.81	.82

Source: Administrative records (income tax returns) used in the revenue-sharing program (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1977b, 1979b).

narrowing of the city-suburb income gap, but they are not the same four metropolitan areas identified from table 2. With income measured on a per capita basis, the city-suburb income ratio was higher (indicating a smaller difference) in 1975 than in 1969 in the Philadelphia, St. Louis, Minneapolis-St. Paul, and Seattle-Everett metropolitan areas. As with the median family income figure, however, the changes are quite small.

The overall conclusion is that in most (12) of the 20 largest metropolitan areas, there is no evidence of closing of the city-suburb income gap. The other eight metropolitan areas present a mixed pattern, showing some evidence of narrowing (or halt in the widening) of city and suburban incomes when measured on either a per family or per person basis. Importantly, no metropolitan area exhibited narrowing of the city-suburb income gap on *both* a per family and a per person basis.

Especially surprising is that the Washington, D.C., SMSA—the "vanguard of the back-to-the-city movement"—did not show a narrowing of the city-suburb income gap on *either* a per family or a per person basis. As the data in table 2 show, the median income in 1969 of families in the District of Columbia was 69 percent as large as the median income of families in its surrounding suburbs; when averaged over the 1975-77 period, families in the District had a median income only 63 percent as large as suburban families. On a per capita basis the ratio of city-to-suburban incomes in the Washington, D.C., SMSA fell from .87 in 1969 to .83 in 1975. Whatever the exact scale of the back-to-the-city movement in Washington, D.C., it is not reducing city-suburb income differences, at least not according to the most recent available data.

Of course, subsequent data may show a narrowing of city-suburb income differences in Washington, D.C., and in other metropolitan areas as well. And somewhat different results than those reported here might be obtained if one conceptualized "suburban" in ways other than the residual part of SMSA's (as defined in 1970) lying outside the central city. Ways of disaggregating suburbia are discussed in the next section. But for now, our conclusion is that back-to-the-city trends, although highly visible and of significance in individual neighborhoods, do not yet appear to be large enough to clearly establish a new trend toward convergence of city and suburban income levels.

Perhaps an appropriate analogy is that back-to-the-city trends are creating or expanding relatively affluent "islands" of middle-income households in cities where the overall income level is not yet clearly rising relative to suburban income. In fact, city incomes outside the "resettlement neighborhoods" (Gale, 1979) are almost certainly falling relative to suburban income. Middle-income islands in cities will have to grow larger or increase in number before city incomes are raised enough to reduce the city-suburb income gap.

SUBURBAN VARIABILITY

For the sake of convenience and because data are often produced in terms of the "balance of the SMSA," to this point we have referred to this entire noncentral city portion of metropolitan areas as suburban. While this practice seems to be satisfactory for most purposes, one should avoid inferring that this outer portion of SMSA's is uniformly suburban and consists of homogeneous white-collar middle-income families. Variability within the balance-of-SMSA aggregate arises from many causes, including numerous longstanding suburban enclaves of moderately priced housing, factories that moved to the suburbs and took their workers with them, the spillover that occurs when low-income areas of cities expand outward along sectors that push into suburban territory (Rose, 1976), and previously existing settlements that were engulfed by expanding metropolitan areas.

New forces may also be altering the face of suburbia and adding new dimensions to suburban differentiation. Many older suburbs lie adjacent to

central city boundaries, and because they were built several decades ago they are likely to have aging housing and aging populations (Sternlieb and Lake, 1975). Even the original Levittown, in many ways the prototypical post-World War II suburb, has now passed its 30th birthday. Numerous suburban communities that had expanding populations in the high-fertility years of the 1950's now consist of growing numbers of small "empty-nest" households whose baby-boom children have left the parental home (Gutowski and Feild, 1979).

These considerations suggest the possibility that a ring of inner suburbs may well start to show population declines and perhaps some evidence of sluggish income growth or even the signs of decay and deterioration customarily identified with central cities. The reasons, as mentioned, involve the relative deterioration and the filtering of older housing in the inner suburbs to successively lower income households leaving the central cities. Then too, the aging population that remains in the inner suburbs may be past its peak earning power and include many residents relying on pensions.

Farther removed from the city, in a metropolitan area's "intermediate" or "outer" suburbs, more affluent residents can still afford to move to newer more desirable housing, often on larger lots and in communities that have carefully regulated the mix of commercial and residential usage of land. In one sense, this view of metropolitan areas is simply a way of saying that they grow at their fringes. The relevance of this point in examining city-suburb income differences is that changes in the relative mix over time between the inner and outer suburbs can affect the ratio of central city income to that in the "suburban balance." More specifically, it is possible that gentrifying central city neighborhoods may be raising the city income level enough to reduce the gap between the city and the ring of inner suburbs.

Among currently available data sources, the one that comes closest to providing a test for these effects is the set of figures on population and per capita income used in the revenue-sharing program. The Census Bureau, for selected years since 1970, has published population and per capita income for each of the more than 39,000 jurisdictions that participate in this program, which range in size from small incorporated places of less than 100 persons to the largest cities.

Of the 20 SMSA's previously examined, three were chosen—Washington, D.C., St. Louis, and Cleveland—to identify inner, intermediate, and outer suburbs. These three were selected simply because they had central cities that were most completely surrounded by revenue-sharing jurisdictions and in addition included counties that most nearly lent themselves to identification of intermediate and outer suburbs. Revenue-sharing jurisdictions contiguous to the central city were labeled the inner suburbs, except in the case of Washington, D.C., for which we also compiled data for additional jurisdictions inside interstate highway 495, the beltway that encircles the District of Columbia. The rationale for showing places inside the I-495 beltway is that

"[i]n the Washington region, the Capital Beltway [I-495] forms a convenient division between the inner suburbs and the outer suburbs" (Goldfield, 1976, p. 94). In all three metropolitan areas, the intermediate suburbs consist of places beyond the inner suburbs but within counties containing or adjacent to the central city and include the population of these counties not living in a revenue-sharing jurisdiction. The outer suburbs are counties that are at least one county removed from the central city. Data on population and per capita income changes since 1970 for these three SMSA's and their inner, intermediate, and outer suburbs are shown in table 4.

In all three cases, the inner suburbs have decreased in population since 1970. In the case of the Washington, D.C., SMSA, the population of revenue-sharing jurisdictions inside the beltway experienced population decline about as rapidly as that of the District of Columbia, whose population fell by 7.5 percent between 1970 and 1976. In the inner suburbs of Cleveland and St. Louis, population declines also occurred but were not quite as large as in their central cities.

In each of these three cases the rate of population growth also tended to increase with increasing distance from the central city. The intermediate suburbs in all three metropolitan areas are shown to have experienced moderate (but positive) rates of population growth since 1970 and even faster growth in the outer suburbs. These data are important in demonstrating that even metropolitan areas experiencing decline in total population, as in the Cleveland and St. Louis SMSA's, can possess rapidly growing fringe areas. In other words, metropolitan areas that are shrinking in terms of total population can still be growing on their peripheries as has traditionally been the experience of growing metropolitan areas.

These population patterns appear to be broadly characteristic of many SMSA's, as shown in a recent study that compiled data for all SMSA's, showing population change in 1950-60 and 1960-70 for revenue-sharing jurisdictions for which 1970-75 data were available (Guest, 1979). That study reported an increasing tendency over the 25-year period for the suburbs within 10 miles of the central city to shift toward population decline. It also found a tendency for more and more suburban municipalities located 10 to 20 miles from the central city to shift toward population decrease in the 1970's.

Contrary to our expectations, there is little evidence to suggest that per capita income growth in the inner suburbs is appreciably slower than in central cities. In fact, in the Washington, D.C., and St. Louis metropolitan areas, the inner suburbs actually experienced growth in per capita income between 1969 and 1975 that exceeded that of the central cities. Our expectation was that if, for instance, gentrification in Washington was not narrowing the overall city-suburb income gap, then maybe it was nonetheless beginning to narrow the gap between the central city and its older inner suburbs. But in each of the successively more distant suburban rings identified for the

Table 4. Changes in Population and Per Capita Income in the Central City and in Successively More Distant Suburban Jurisdictions, for the Washington, D.C., Cleveland, and St. Louis Metropolitan Areas: 1970 to 1976

SMSA	Population			Per capita income		
	1970	1976	Percent change	1969	1975	Percent change
Washington, D.C.-Md.-Va.	2,844,831	2,952,771	3.8	4,265	6,853	60.7
Central city	756,668	700,130	-7.5	3,843	6,007	56.1
Inner suburbs·						
Revenue-sharing jurisdictions contiguous to central city	338,267	311,981	-7.8	4,982	8,138	63.4
Other revenue-sharing jurisdictions inside the beltway	116,448	108,292	-7.5	3,864	6,076	57.2
Intermediate suburbs[1]	1,502,798	1,651,754	9.9	4,458	7,193	61.4
Outer suburbs[2]	130,650	180,614	38.2	2,983	5,274	76.8
Cleveland, Ohio	2,064,729	1,967,244	-4.7	3,643	5,382	47.4
Central city	750,879	625,643	-16.7	2,823	4,084	44.7
Inner suburbs[3]	598,772	566,955	-5.3	4,287	6,151	43.5
Intermediate suburbs[4]	371,184	393,677	6.1	4,490	6,651	48.1
Outer suburbs[5]	343,894	380,969	10.8	3,399	5,053	48.7

See footnotes on p. 16.

Table 4. Changes in Population and Per Capita Income in the Central City and in Successively More Distant Suburban Jurisdictions, for the Washington, D.C., Cleveland, and St. Louis Metropolitan Areas: 1970 to 1976—Continued

SMSA	Population			Per capita income		
	1970	1976	Percent change	1969	1975	Percent change
St. Louis, Mo.-Ill.	2,363,738	2,334,414	-1.2	3,295	5,079	54.1
Central city	622,236	519,345	-16.5	2,726	4,278	56.9
Inner suburbs[3]	254,892	230,075	-9.7	3,346	5,261	57.2
Intermediate suburbs[6]	1,233,281	1,280,816	3.9	3,671	5,574	51.8
Outer suburbs[7]	253,329	304,178	20.1	2,786	4,221	51.5

[1] Revenue-sharing jurisdictions outside but contiguous to beltway and all of Prince Georges and Montgomery county population not residing in revenue-sharing jurisdictions.
[2] Loudon and Prince William counties.
[3] Revenue-sharing jurisdictions contiguous to central city.
[4] Balance of Cuyahoga County not in the inner suburbs.
[5] Geauga, Lake, and Medina counties.
[6] Balance of St. Louis, Madison, and St. Clair counties not in the inner suburbs.
[7] St. Charles, Franklin, and Jefferson counties.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1979b).

Washington, D.C., SMSA, per capita income increased more rapidly than in the central city.

Of course, individual jurisdictions within the inner suburbs exhibit considerable variability in income level and other measures, and the 1980 census will provide a better means than currently available for disaggregating the "balance of SMSA." The present results, however, seem to reinforce the previous suggestion that the neighborhoods where back-to-the-city/stay-in-the-city movers are settling constitute islands whose impact is still not large enough to raise overall income levels of cities to the point that the city-suburb income gap is reduced. In Washington, D.C., where such "turnaround" neighborhoods are thought to be especially prominent, both the inner and the outer suburbs had greater increases in per capita income than the central city between 1969 and 1975.

NONMETROPOLITAN INCOME TRENDS

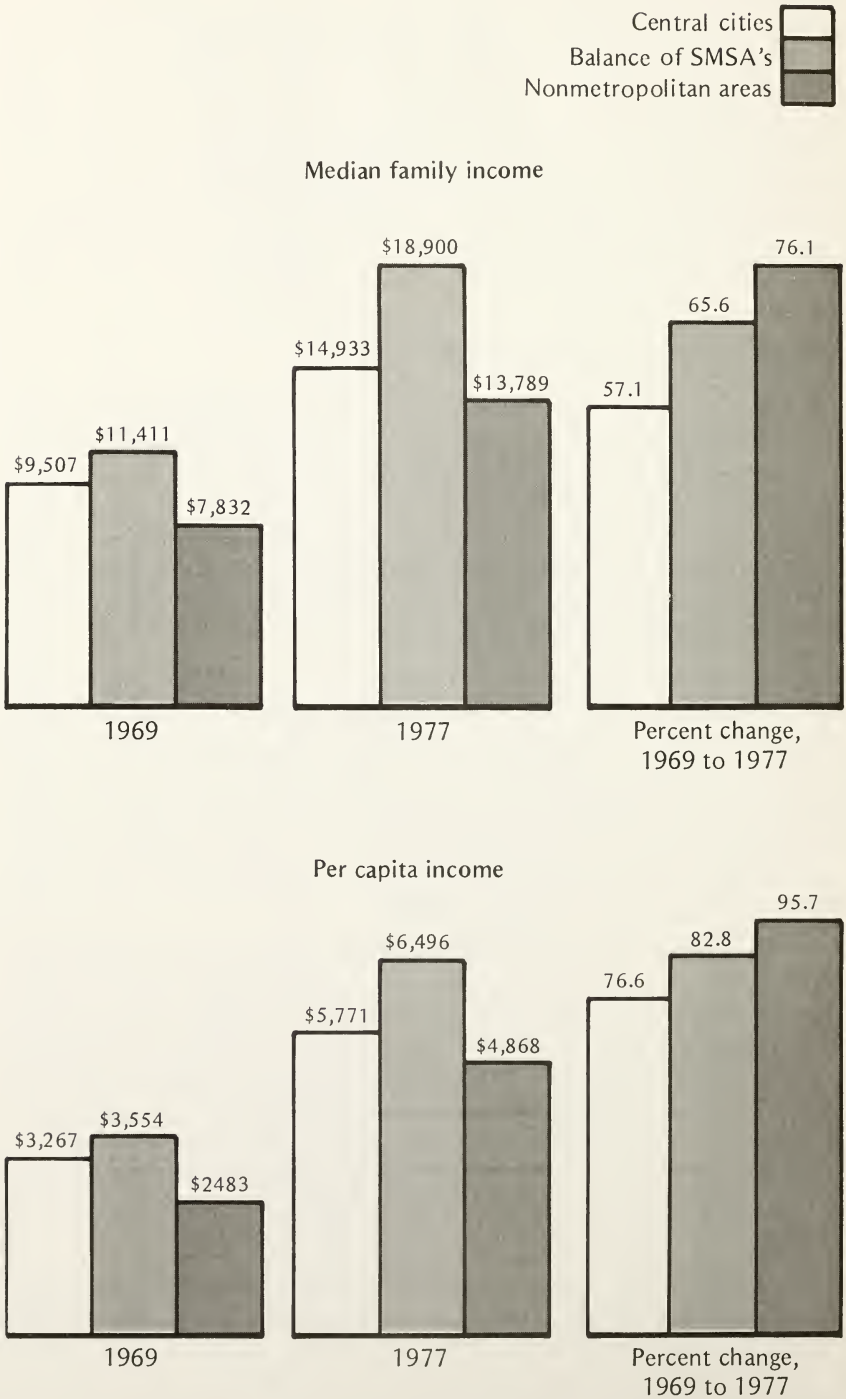
The persistence of income differences between city and suburban populations stands in sharp contrast to the narrowing of income differences between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan populations, as observed earlier. What is not obvious is that in the 1970's not only have the incomes of city residents failed to keep pace with increases in income of suburban residents but city residents' incomes have also been outpaced by income increases in the nonmetropolitan population. Changes in income per family and per person in the three residential locations are illustrated in figure 2.

As can be seen, the percent change between the 1969 and 1977 income years was 57.1 percent for central city families, 65.6 percent for suburban families, and 76.1 percent for families living in nonmetropolitan areas. Interestingly, of the three residential locations, only in the nonmetropolitan category has family income clearly increased faster than inflation. Between 1969 and 1977 the Consumer Price Index rose by 65.3 percent—faster than the income of city families, about as fast as the income of suburban families, but more slowly than the income of nonmetropolitan families.

The faster rate of increase in family income in nonmetropolitan areas holds up even when we take into account the fact that some of the territory included in the nonmetropolitan category in figure 2 could be reclassified as metropolitan as a result of the expansion of existing metropolitan areas and as nonmetropolitan towns and cities have grown to metropolitan status since 1970. The data in figure 2 reflect city boundaries and metropolitan areas defined as of 1970, but even in the nonmetropolitan counties that would not be reclassified as metropolitan, family income increased at a faster pace than in the cities or suburban territory included in figure 2 and faster than the rate of inflation (see U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1978b, pp. 104-105).

On a per capita basis, income in all three residential categories has increased more rapidly than inflation, but again the increase has been greater for those

Figure 2. Change and rate of change between 1969 and 1977 in median family income and per capita income in central cities, balance of SMSA's, and nonmetropolitan areas



living in nonmetropolitan areas than for central city or suburban residents. Between 1969 and 1977, per capita income increased 76.6 percent for city residents, 82.8 percent for suburbanites, and 95.7 percent for nonmetropolitan residents. While it is true that residents of cities and suburbs continue to have higher median family and per capita incomes than nonmetropolitan residents, faster income growth in nonmetropolitan areas (and apparently even those areas that have achieved metropolitan status since 1970) is narrowing traditional metropolitan-nonmetropolitan income differences. If the generally lower cost of living in nonmetropolitan areas could also be taken into account, metropolitan-nonmetropolitan income differences would be even less than indicated in figure 2.

There is, however, some evidence that on a per capita basis the income of city residents improved relative to the income of suburbanites and nonmetropolitan residents between income years 1976 and 1977. As shown in table 1, the ratio of city income per capita to suburban income per capita seemingly rose from .88 in 1976 to .89 in 1977, with the ratio of city income per capita to nonmetropolitan income per capita rising from 1.18 to 1.19. But these apparent improvements of city per capita incomes relative to suburban and nonmetropolitan incomes should not be overemphasized because they are subject to sampling variability and may simply be a reflection of population redistribution away from high-income metropolitan areas (which often have wide city-suburb income differentiation) toward nonmetropolitan and small metropolitan areas (which often have relatively small city-suburb income differentiation).

CONCLUSION

Using currently available data for the mid- to late 1970's, we found little evidence of a systematic narrowing of family incomes in cities and suburbs, as might be expected if a gentrifying back-to-the-city/stay-in-the-city trend is causing large numbers of middle-income families to choose a residence in the city rather than the suburbs. Since the number of back-to-the-city/stay-in-the-city movers is not precisely known, neither is their average income level, but numbers sometimes cited in this regard suggest fairly substantial incomes relative to citywide averages. According to the *President's National Urban Policy Report*, "much of this so-called 'gentrification' is occurring among households with incomes above $25,000" (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1978, p. 56). A $25,000-per-year income in 1977 would be large relative to citywide averages and, in fact, would be 67 percent larger than the median income in 1977 of all families in central cities of SMSA's. Although the number of gentrifying households may be large in an absolute sense, it apparently is not large enough to raise the average income of city families to the point of reducing the income gap between city and suburban families.

Of course, many of the back-to-the-city/stay-in-the-city movers do not live as families but live alone, as cohabiting couples, as roommates, or in some other

living arrangement that may not be considered a family in Census Bureau data. To take account of this fact, we examined income on a per capita basis, and for the Nation as a whole we found some evidence of recent improvement in city income per capita relative to income per capita in suburban and nonmetropolitan territory. But in Washington, D.C., per capita income differences between the central city and the balance of the SMSA *increased* between 1969 and 1975. This finding held up even when we disaggregated the Washington, D.C., suburbs into those that are older and lying immediately adjacent to the central city (and where sluggish income growth was expected) and those farther out. In none of the 20 largest SMSA's was there evidence of narrowing the city-suburb income gap on both a per person and a per family basis.

All things considered, the data suggest that gentrifying trends are probably expanding the size and number of middle-to-upper-income enclaves (Richard Nathan [1979, p. 5] calls them "pockets of plenty") in some large cities, without raising city incomes enough to establish a new trend toward convergence of city and suburban income levels. This conclusion suggests a continuation of some patterns evident in the 1960's, when a number of gentrifying central city neighborhoods could be identified but whose size and number never became large enough to offset the general deterioration of personal income of city residents relative to that of suburbanites. In Washington, D.C., and a number of other central cities, for example, an increase occurred between 1960 and 1970 in the number of census tracts where median family income was above the SMSA average (Lipton, 1977), but the average income of city residents still fell relative to the income level of suburbanites in the 1960-70 decade.

The 1980 census will show the degree to which these gentrifying neighborhoods have further increased in number and size in the 1970's. When they have increased to the point of raising personal incomes in cities so as to start closing the city-suburb income gap, an important turning point will have been reached. Until then, the challenge that faces urban policy makers and local administrators is reconciling the interests of city residents who live in the expanding middle-income enclaves and those who do not.

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